15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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trepanger, trader, scientist, and missionary with peculiar and unheard of ideas, and with theories of personal possessions, which they decline to share, although living in an aboriginal community based on reciprocal sharing and exchanging, in which all are relations.

These two systems have been clashing for one hundred and seventy years, and while some pioneers and traders have resorted to force and compulsion, others have reasoned and explained their attitude to property and the necessity for respecting personal possessions. But whatever methods have been adopted to instil in the aboriginal a new regard for private property, he retains his ancient, instinctive, and characteristic attitude of innocently using whatever takes his fancy. A missionary once told me he had shut a youth in a tool shed for continued pilfering, but that each night he climbed out through the gable, spent the night in camp with his friends, and was back in detention next morning, ready for breakfast and official release. On another station the missionary pointed to a roomy wooden hut under a shady tamarind tree, and said that it had been put there as a warning to deter pilfering from the gardens. Eventually, with due ceremony, a Yulengor was locked up, but he burrowed his way out through the sandy floor and made nocturnal visits to his friends. By morning he was back in place with the hole filled in, and ready for food, tobacco, and a sleep during the day. In the following wet season he claimed the building for himself and family and proceeded to camp in it.

Trepangers made seasonal visits to Arnhem Land, and property rights were argued with spears and rifles. At the first hint of trouble these fishermen sailed away, and their obvious precautions were not lost on nomads, who realized that they were feared and developed lugger-raiding propensities.

Apart from the desirability of exercising some control over warlike hordes, a simple code of law and order was necessary

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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It gives the father added bonds with waku (his sister's son) because the latter becomes husband to the daughter; it strengthens his position with daughter's son, who is waku to ego's son. A man prefers a son, however, because of his value in the constant tribal feuds, not only through his own assistance and the aid he brings to his relations (as, of course, the daughter does through her marriage), but also because almost the entire ceremonial life of the father's clan and tribe is centered around the males. A son inherits the right to perform certain dances through his father and never through his mother. By a son's initiation into the various ceremonies the father's social participation is further increased as it would not be if the child were a daughter.*

Each clan has ceremonial leaders for one or all of the ceremonies it owns. The leadership is inherited by the oldest son if he is old enough. If not, the deceased father's next oldest brother inherits the right until the son is old enough; or at the death or senility of the second brother the son becomes leader. The course taken depends largely upon the personalities of the two men, but in all events the son is looked upon as the heir to these rights. Such ceremonial leadership makes of a person a kind of clan headman.

When a boy is to be circumcised (at from six to nine years of age), it is the father who decides the type of initiation ceremony. The other old men of the tribe confer with him as to time, place, and other arrangements. The father and the mother make presents to the man who paints the child's body in preparation for the initiation. The father is one of those who teach his son how to hunt, fight, and conduct himself in the best possible way in the practical affairs of life. If the father is a ceremonial leader he instructs his son in the routine of songs, dances, and words that make up the great ceremonies.

Before the actual circumcision the neophyte is sent on a journey through the country of the various clans to inform the people of the coming ceremony and to collect presents. The father may refuse to send his son if he wishes; or, if he wants the boy to go, he may order him to leave and to take a certain route. No one else could do this.

A father never corrects his children. This is left to other kin (see mari, nati, et cetera).

Fathers and sons often cooperate in making a canoe. A son must always acquiesce in a father's request for the use of a canoe, or of any of the son's property. A father occupies a place much like an older

*For a full account of the individual's change of status, see Chapter IV, Age Grading.

But in few cases where exchange of goods takes place is the matter as simple as this. In almost all, the ceremonial accompaniment is the important factor, and the exchange or trade, the hard, matter-of-fact, economic aspect of the transaction, is to the Arnhemlander, relatively unimportant. Reduced to the level of mere "commerce"—the exchange of commodities, their value balanced against one another, shorn of the vital ceremonial, the transaction loses much of its meaning and interest to the native. To him it is the preparation for a visit to relatives within the ceremonial exchange cycle to discharge his obligations, the journey, the ritual, the formalities to be observed on arriving at the camp, the niceties of behaviour and etiquette, rather than the actual *gerri*, the goods themselves, that he values. So that in any appreciation of the economic life and exchange system of these people, in any study of their production of wealth and distribution or circulation of objects of material value, due regard must be placed on the psychological and social attitudes, which dominate and often mask and obscure, the undercurrent of economic exchange. Yet inside the framework of the kinship system and the clan organisation, within the exacting totemic scheme, each man carries on a system of exchange of *gerri*, of gift and counter gift, so that he is obliged to spend much of his working life in preparations to discharge obligations imposed upon him by the system into which he is born.

But in spite of this stress on the *traditional*, on the ritual and ceremonial aspects, the emphasis on etiquette and behaviour, there is no suggestion here of the "primitive communism" which looms large in the references which occur in text books to the economic life of the people at the level of culture of the aborigines. The very words

421 for giving, for possession, the fine shades of distinction which are drawn between each type of gift or exchange, as well as the strict recognition of the rights of a man to use and dispose of his own property, all lay stress on this. No man would think of using the weapons or personal possessions of another without specific permission. To do so would lead inevitably to a fight. But there are a few well-defined exceptions to this rule which occur in some special relationships within the kinship system, where behaviour is marked by much freedom, and in which relatives of certain orders (*vide infra*) borrow one another's *gerri* without permission and without any fear of resentment or reprisal. These examples are exceptional and are associated with a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by extreme licence, contrasting strongly with the rigid tabu which marks certain other relationships, particularly that between mother-in-law and son-in-law, and only to a slightly lesser extent, between brother and sister.

578 Theft is regarded very seriously among these people, and
685 I have heard altercations raging when boys or young men from the single men's camp had stolen vegetable food belonging to women, while it was still in course of preparation. Violent abuse, leading to a general fight in camp, often results even from such minor theft, and large expiatory payments of food would be made by the close relatives of the offenders to avert more serious consequences.

421 These facts stress the recognition of the individual owner-
602 ship of property. This is emphasised also by the special feature which is made of the right of *kutara* (sister's daughter's son) to take or borrow possessions of a *mari* (mother's mother's brother) with whom a special "joking relation-

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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ship" called *wäkkälmändji*[27] exists. Here again this right to use the property of a *mari* (always a distant or "outside" *mari* under the kinship system) is part of the pattern of extreme licence in behaviour which is permitted or even obligatory between certain men who stand in the relationship of *mari* ⇌ *kutara* to one another. The behaviour in this case emphasises the fact that this is a very special and unusual relationship and one which contrasts with the normal pattern of behaviour, of which it is a complete reversal. Towards my own *mari*, my own mother's mother's brother, the man whose daughter's daughter I may marry—whose actual daughter, my *mukul rumaro* (mother-in-law), is tabu, and to whom I must behave with greater reserve than to any other person in my kinship pattern—to this man I act with great circumspection and austerity. This is in marked contrast with the behaviour towards the *mari* whom I call *wäkkälmändji*, and whose *gerri* I may borrow.

This behaviour again serves to stress the fact that although material possessions among these people are simple and relatively few, the question of individual ownership of property and the right to dispose of this, is never in question, but is actually stressed in the kinship system, which defines and regulates conduct.

[27] The "joking relationship", which serves to stress and to give point and contrast to, the behaviour between relatives in which the pattern is very restrained and austere, often takes the form of organised licence with exchange of obscene jokes and taunts which under other circumstances would lead inevitably to a fight, is a feature of the social organisation in many parts of Australia although there is little reference to it in the accounts of kinship which have been published.

See Donald F. Thomson, *The Joking Relationship and Organised Obscenity in North Queensland*, American Anthropologist, Vol. 37, No. 3, July-September, 1935.

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797 845 847 the birth of twins came to be regarded as an ill-omen to be removed only by killing one of them. The establishment of a station, with its agriculture and food resources, removed the original cause of infanticide, and it became more than justifiable to discourage the practice.

797 595 Polygamy also can never be met by alien dictate, though unfortunately it is a persistent 'red herring', and some reformers have attempted to establish monogamy within a few years. In one instance, old much-married men each brought one wife to the station and then established bush camps about half a mile away in the scrub for their other wives and children. I never deliberately suggested monogamy to Yulengor; but of course they realized that I had one wife whilst some of them had three, eight, a dozen, or even more, and they talked about the poverty of my house and discussed with me the practices of a Christian community. Apparently the matter ended there; but after four or five years amongst them, I wondered if a change was not coming too suddenly when several of the younger men [177] told me that they intended having only one wife each. This revolutionary change can be effected, when they are ready for it and want it, without serious disruption, for men may pass over their 'promised' wives to young, unmarried brothers who stand in the same tribal relationship of 'husband' to the women.

●421 Again, aborigines are reputed to be pilferers; but their outlook is so totally different from ours that they cannot be judged by our codes. In their world of nomadism they innocently pick up and use whatever takes their fancy; everything edible is there for eating, and they roam at will with all their possessions in their hands. If a nomad finds another man's canoe in a bay or creek, he feels quite at liberty to make full use of it, paddling it away for perhaps twenty miles before leaving it for the owner to recover. [177] Into this ancient world of the nomad came the foreign